

Can the demise of Belize be averted? Its continued existence -- politically, culturally, demographically, linguistically, and ecologically -- is in jeopardy, threatened from without and from within, writes Joseph E. Fallon, who explores existential threats in this article. Belize, which achieved its independence from the U.K. in 1981, is the only English-speaking country in Central America. With a population of 468,310 (2015 estimate), the country is a multi-racial society characterized by political stability and racial tolerance. Conditions historically lacking in the neighboring states. Belize is a parliamentary democracy; a member of the Commonwealth with Queen Elizabeth II as Head of State. Located on the eastern side of the Yucatan peninsula; washed by the waters of the Caribbean Sea, Belize is bordered by Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the south and west. Encompassing 8,867 square miles, and extending 174 miles from north to south and expanding 68 miles from east to west, Belize is roughly the size of the State of Massachusetts and larger than El Salvador, Israel, or Slovenia. Add to this its offshore territorial waters extending 12 miles and the size of the country more than doubles to 18,000 square miles. Because of the natural beauty of its territory, both on land and sea, tourism is a major part of the Belizean economy.

The country was formerly known as the Crown Colony of British Honduras. For nearly 350 years, it had been one of the Crown Jewels of British Central America. From the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century, British influence grew to cover a vast stretch of Central America. In addition to the Crown Colony of British Honduras, there was the British Protectorate of the Miskito Kingdom and the British "alliance" with the independent Maya State of Chan Santa Cruz in the Yucatan. Until the "Great Rapprochement" between Washington and London during the period 1895-1915, the U.S. had historically viewed the U.K. as "the enemy" and successfully worked to abolish the identity and political existence of the latter two British "possessions". Only British Honduras, renamed Belize in 1973, endured.

There are four existential threats confronting Belize.

First, according to the CIA's The World Factbook (2017), "Guatemala persists in its territorial claim to half of Belize", which amount to 4,738 square miles, and includes the cayes. In furtherance of this claim, the Guatemala government has permitted, if not encouraged, its citizens to raid Belizean territory and rob Belize of its natural resources. On April 22, 2016, GlobalSecurity.org reported, "Belize has suffered losses in its rainforest along the southern border as there have been numerous incursions with Guatemalans stripping the environment of its natural resources. Those resources range from xate leaves to gold and from rosewood trees to marine life."

Second, Salvadorans, along with Hondurans and Guatemalans are invading and colonizing the rich lands of this small, virtually defenseless country. A study in 2011 by Guatemala's Central American Institute of Social Studies and Development (INCEDES) and Mexico's Institute for

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Studies and Dissemination on Migration (INEDIM), Communication on the issue of the problem of migration and security in Central America and Mexico, reported "Belize is the second best destination for undocumented Central American immigration after the United States." This colonization has resulted in Belize having one of the highest population growth rates in the Western Hemisphere of 1.87 percent per year.

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The CIA's The World Factbook (2017) states "...the influx of Central American immigrants, mainly Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Hondurans, has changed Belize's ethnic composition. Mestizos have become the largest ethnic group, and Belize now has more native Spanish speakers than English or Creole speakers, despite English being the official language"

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Third, transnational Hispanic colonizers have been joined by transnational Hispanic street gangs, in particular the Salvadoran Maras. Insight Crime reported July 19, 2012, "El Salvador's two largest gangs, the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18, have a presence in the country's capital, Belmopan." According to the Inter-American Dialogue Report, "Organized Crime and Insecurity in Belize", January 2013, "Entering Belize by land through its western border with Guatemala, it is not difficult to spot 18 graffiti on abandoned buildings in border towns." The growing criminal activities of these and other street gangs have overwhelmed the understaffed, underfunded local police force. Belize now has one of the highest murder rates in the world, though it is still lower than that in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

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Fourth, The Inter-American Dialogue Report also found "Belize has proven to have geographical and strategic importance to traffickers of illegal goods (from firearms to drugs), human smugglers, and gangs, all of which operate on a transnational level and often have a significant presence in the United States." The importance of Belize for Mexican and South American drug cartels is that the country can act as a transit point, both within Central America as well as between North and South America, because its extensive uninhabited rainforests and coral islands are only defended by a small police department (2,067 in 2015) and small military force (over 1,500 in 2016). Both are ill-equipped, insufficiently trained, and ineffectively deployed. The operations of Hispanic drug cartels have been facilitated by the presence of the Hispanics invading Belize. According to The Washington Post, "Mexican drug cartels reach into tiny Belize", October 11, 2011, "The language difference is no obstacle to the Mexican traffickers, authorities say, because waves of Spanish-speaking migrants from El Salvador and Guatemala have settled in Belize's northern and western districts — areas that are now trafficking hot spots."

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Why are Hispanics invading Belize? Because Belize is a rich prize of natural resources. Trees,

such as rosewood and mahogany, to be illegally cut and sold; exotic animals, including endangered species, to be captured or killed and sold on the black-market. Forests to be slashed and burned for colonization.

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Belize is a rich prize, indeed. It possesses one of the world's most diverse ecosystems with the 49 distinct types of forests, which cover more than half of the country providing homes to over 5,000 species of plants and hundreds of species of animals, including over 500 species of birds, and 150 species of amphibians and reptiles. While it's off shore waters are home to nearly 600 species of fish.

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According to the Belize Department of Environment, *Wealth Untold* (2012), "As a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Belize has been actively protecting wildlife for decades. Thanks to its persistent efforts, many wildlife species populations, such as jaguars, crocodiles, manatees, Jabiru storks, howler monkeys, sea and freshwater turtles, and other forest and marine species are being recovered."

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Along with its mangrove ecosystem, lagoons, more than 200 cayes, the Great Blue Hole, a giant submarine sinkhole, and the 190 miles long Belize Barrier Reef, the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Belize forms an integral part of the Mesoamerican Biodiversity Corridor, which seeks to accommodate animal migration both within the region and between the American continents with economic development.

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Belize has 3 primary biological corridors, 70 recognized ecosystems, and 108 protected areas. As of 2017, there are one mangrove reserve, three nature reserves, seven wildlife sanctuaries, including the world's only jaguar reserve, sixteen forest reserves, nine marine reserves and twelve spawning aggregation sites, seven bird sanctuaries, six private reserves, and sixteen archaeological sites.

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"Governance Diversity for Belize", April 26, 2017, *The World Database on Protected Areas*, reported: "Belize is ...a leader in protected areas designation and governance. Belize is one of only a dozen countries that have met Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) to conserve 17% of its terrestrial and 10% of its marine areas." In fact, Belize has surpassed that target having 37 percent of its land and 13 percent of its territorial waters under some form of conservation management and protected status.

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All this natural beauty, all these sanctuaries, all the years of conservation and protection of the local environment and land and marine wildlife are endangered -- as is the continued existence of Belize, itself -- by the ongoing Hispanic invasion and colonization of its territory.

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As reported in State of Belize Protected Areas – 2009, “Overall, the viability of the terrestrial protected areas system of Belize is considered to rate at the lower end of GOOD, with an effectiveness of 57.0%. If taken in the context of the status ten to fifteen years ago, prior to the current Guatemalan incursions and expansion of the human footprint, this represents a significant decline across the system, with the rating slipping from VERY GOOD.”

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The destruction of the protected areas of Belize by Hispanic invaders continues unabated. On April 23, 2016, Amandala reported on the scope of the devastation being wrought in the largest nature reserve, Chiquibul National Park.

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"Guatemala farmers and poachers continue to impact the Chiquibul Forest Reserve, in the Cayo District, by clearing plots for farming as far as 45 kilometers into Belizean territory. The Guatemalans are boldly pushing forward in activities involving illegal logging and wildlife depletion, as well as the looting of cultural artifacts, all of which are negatively impacting the Chiquibul. Persistent reports to us are that presently, large areas of the forests are cleared for milpa farming, by fire, and that the practice is destroying the habitats of many plants and animals, and thus threatening the ecosystem within the forest. About 27 milpa farms were located in the Chiquibul in 2015, and about 3,126 hectares of tropical forest have disappeared. The financial loss for Belize as a result of this, is estimated at about \$1 million annually.

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Amandala visited the Chiquibul today to see what was happening and saw extensive destruction of the forest reserve. Huge acres of land were cleared and burnt, and smoke was still rising from some of the burnt areas. Cows and horses were also seen in some areas, brought in by Guatemala farmers to graze in Chiquibul.

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Director of the Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD), [Rafael Manzanero], which performs the role of caretaker of the Chiquibul National Park, told Amandala in an interview that the trend of the incursions is increasing and is of great concern, since the farmers are changing the landscape of the Chiquibul, and left unchecked, the reserve will become an agricultural belt for the benefit of Guatemalan farmers. Also, since the forest is being impacted, leaving large areas exposed to the elements, erosions will begin to take its toll.

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Chiquibul is home to many endangered species of birds, such as the Scarlet Macaw. It is estimated that only about 200 birds are still living in the wild in Belize. The birds are captured at a young age to be sold as pets in the illegal pet trade market. Poaching accounts for 27% of the breeding failures in the Scarlet Macaw population. On the black market, the price of a Scarlet macaw is about US\$2,000. There are also gold deposits in the Ceibo Chico area, where the Guatemalans pan for gold illegally.

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Rafael Manzanero said ...there is now a shift, and the Guatemalans are now moving south, where they continue their invasion of the Chiquibul.”

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Until the present, Belize had successfully repulsed Spanish invasions. First settled in 1638 by English and Scot buccaneers, called the Baymen, as a base to attack Spanish galleons sailing from the Spanish Main to Seville laden with silver, gold, emeralds, and pearls, the Baymen soon discovered the land, itself, offered greater economic rewards in the logwood trade. Black slaves were used to cut the wood, which provided a textile dye essential to the British wool industry. Upon this trade in timber, which later included mahogany, a valuable lumber used in the furniture industry, the settlement flourished. ÂÂ For over a century, the settlement was a de facto independent polity. The Baymen established their own government with legislature, the “Public Meeting”, and laws. Repeated attempts by Spain to destroy the settlement failed..

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London ultimately assumed control over the Baymen’s colony. In 1762, the Baymen Settlement was declared a British colony and given the name of British Honduras. In 1765, Rear Admiral Sir William Burnaby, commander-in-chief of Jamaica, went to the Baymen’s settlement and codified their laws. In 1786, Colonel Edward Marcus Despard became the first superintendent for British Honduras. From September 3-10, 1798, Spain with a fleet of 30 ships, 300 sailors and 2,000 soldiers made one last attempt to destroy the settlement, but were defeated by the Baymen in the Battle of St. George’s Caye.

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The land surrounding the Bay of Honduras was officially divided between London and Madrid. To the north, the territory was British; to the south Spanish. In 1862, British Honduras was declared a “Crown Colony”. It became a self-governing colony in 1964. That government officially changed the name of the colony from “British Honduras” to “Belize” in 1973.

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The origin of the name “Belize” is unclear. The Maya Civilization flourished in the area from 1000 BC to 900 AD. According to Minority Rights Group International, “Maya territory in Belize supported an estimated population of 1 to 2 million people and large cities such as Xunantunich, Caracol, and Lamanai... [and] was also an important trading centre for the entire Maya area”. Therefore, one of the two most popular beliefs for the origin of the name “Belize” is that it is derived from the Maya word “Balix” for “muddied waters” referring to the Belize River. The other popular belief for the name “Belize” is that it is a Spanish mispronunciation of the surname “Wallace”. The Scot Buccaneer, Peter Wallace, is said to have established a settlement in the territory in 1638. As late as 1798, Spanish Archives identified the Baymen’s settlement as “Wallix”, which would be pronounced as “Balise”.

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While Spain failed to destroy “Belize” in 1798, Madrid’s goal may now succeed through the ongoing Hispanic invasion and colonization of Belize.

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This Hispanic colonization is altering the cultural, demographic, and linguistic identity of Belize. It has reduced the local population of Blacks and Maya, together once a majority, to a minority. It is a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article II, (c) “Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;”

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As stated in the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Trial Chamber (July 31, 2003), “It is not necessary that the group actually be destroyed, whether in whole or in part: what matters is that the perpetrator intended the destruction to take place.”

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No Way Home: Iraq’s Minorities on the Verge of Disappearance (2016), published by Minority Rights Group International, Institute for International Law and Human Rights, No Peace Without Justice, and Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, declares “It has, nonetheless, been recognized that the intention to destroy a group in whole or in part may be inferred from the circumstances...If intent must be inferred – in the absence, for example, of specific statements or documents demonstrating intent – then the standard required is that it be the only reasonable inference that can be drawn under the circumstances.”

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The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is “jus cogens”. According to the Oxford Bibliographies, “jus cogens (or ius cogens) is a latin phrase that literally means ‘compelling law’. It designates norms from which no derogation is permitted by way of particular agreements...jus cogens is now referred to in several legal instruments within and

beyond the law of treaties. The 1969 and 1986 Vienna Conventions on the Law of Treaties stipulate that a treaty is void if it conflicts with jus cogens (Art. 53 and 64). The same is true for unilateral declarations, following the guiding principles adopted by the International Law Commission in 2006 (Principle 8). According to the Articles on Responsibility finalized by the same commission in 2001 and 2011, states as well as international organizations shall cooperate to bring to an end any serious breach of jus cogens, and shall not recognize as lawful a situation created by such a breach, nor render aid or assistance in maintaining such situation (Art. 41/2001 and 42/2011). Moreover, if states or international organizations are to violate jus cogens, they cannot invoke any circumstance precluding the wrongfulness of their conduct, such as necessity or force majeure (Art. 26). Finally, countermeasures shall not affect jus cogens obligations (Art. 50/2001 and 53/2011). No exhaustive list of peremptory norms has been drawn officially, but it is commonly accepted as including the prohibition of the use of force between states, the prohibition of slavery, racial discrimination, torture and genocide, as well as peoples' right to self-determination."

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What is needed to avert the demise of Belize?

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Treaties on refugees, such as the 1984 Cartagena Convention on Refugees, should be reviewed to see if their implementation in the case of Belize has violated the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. If so, then in accordance with the above cited 1969 and 1986 Vienna Conventions on the Law of Treaties (Art. 53 and 64) those treaties are voided. The penalty specified by the Convention should then be imposed on state and non-state perpetrators. The Commonwealth should take the lead in having this issue brought before the International Court of Justice.

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In accordance with the above cited Articles on Responsibility, amnesty laws for Hispanic "migrants" passed by the Belize government are to be declared null and void.

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Since economic sanctions are imposed upon a country as a means to persuade that government to change its conduct, i.e., Russia over Crimea and Syria for involvement in Lebanon, economic sanctions should similarly be imposed on Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico to persuade those governments to stop their nationals from invading Belize and assist in repatriating those who have. The Commonwealth should take the lead in these negotiations..

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In addition, the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico should be

required to pay compensation to Belize for the destruction to Belize land and natural resources perpetrated by their respective nationals.

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The international community has supported undoing Saddam Hussein's "Arabization" of Iraqi Kurdistan. To be consistent, the international community must similarly support undoing the "Hispanicization" of Belize by Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico.

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Restoring Belize's Black and Maya populations to their historic majority status is a humanitarian imperative. The continued existence of Belize as the only English-speaking, non-Hispanic country in the region, reaffirms the words of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Soviet dissident, and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature: "Does not national variety enrich mankind as faceting increases the value of a jewel?"ÂÂ